

Salt of the Earth

Mothering an Alley

SHE IS a pleasant, gray-haired woman with the interest of Washington, D. C., alley children—white children of illiterate and unfortunate parentage—held high in her big, sympathetic heart. What is she doing in this babel of four-hundred thousand?

She is not a "slummer," nor a missionary, nor a professional uplifter, just an everyday woman who lives among us, a very busy woman with an invalid husband.

Four years ago she rented a most disreputable-looking dumping lot adjoining the most populous alley street in the city to make a garden. She had little means to spare, but she took her chances and had it fenced, with the alley population of children looking on with glee at this new door to mischief.

For a month she found each day, on her return from work in an office, that the alley contingent had torn down a panel in the fence, or had cut the wire from a post, or had climbed a-top the mesh wire making a deep sag. Of course, she heard all sorts of stories from them, denials and falsehoods, until she was sorely discouraged.

She called on the father of the two ringleaders in mischief, and offered him a part of her garden, rent free, if he would interest his two boys in the work. He, an Italian, proved a great help. She also hired a number of the larger boys to help her "clean up" the lot which was covered with debris. They planned a "Hanging Garden of Babylon" on the shady side, to be filled in with the debris, as it was very expensive to have it hauled away, and the Babylonian monarch did not view with greater interest his Wonder of the World than did the builders of this modern pile see its growth and transformation, and I will say here that this proved a thing of beauty when the vines had covered the unsightly mass. In all this she worked with them, and consulted with them as to the means of making a spot of beauty of the unsightly dumping ground. They understood, too, that the surplus from the garden went to the support of French children made orphans by the war.

The ringleaders undertook to police the garden, and now and then she came upon one of them administering a beating to a trespasser. "Keep out o' this. Don't you know how to keep off another man's property?" she heard. Sometimes she sent the whole "gang" to the movies after a particularly hard hour's work.

Soon the swearing stopped in her presence and the fence was untouched. She planted popcorn for them, and she gave them plants to set out at home. It was a show to see her start for her garden with seeds and hoe, followed by the alley brood. The parade took on the appearance of a kind of fallen, creeping comet.

It was appalling how little those children knew of plant life, and surprising how much they learned and wished to learn in one short season. They thought potatoes grew on bushes and corn, peas and turnips had to be pointed out to them, but they were interested and by the end of the season, they would have defended her garden with all the strength of their little bodies.

The next year it was a war garden, and they had great speculation as to the number of soldiers it would feed. The few children left to the alley from the year before had retained their interest. But alley population is a shifting element, and her work had to be re-done, though the leaven of the season before helped her greatly. They stole her onions and cut her fence in April, but by May they were buying school seeds and planting garden boxes at home. The next was a Victory garden, though her sons, in whom the children took great pride, did not return from France in time to enjoy it. That season they



Charles Boyer and his "Joy Giving Car." Through the efforts of one man a whole community has become interested in the happiness of its children and its shut-ins.

begged to "clean up" and "spade up" as a privilege. The teacher in the near-by school was interested now, and spoke to the children in her behalf. Sometimes she heard a hurried "Hush, here she comes," and mild profanity if the caution was too late, but respect for her, her work, and her property had entered the "gang" and she was glad.

And now, as her Thrift garden begins to grow she finds that her "alley brood" needs less and less governing. The fence is never broken; the beds are never robbed. The children take a pride of ownership in the growing things which would be pathetic to an outsider, but which to this woman is the brightest jewel in all her collection. There are dozens of window boxes in the windows of the alley homes; there are scores of little gardens in the neighborhood, and there is an awakening all through this little corner of the community because of this one woman.—L. B. Lawson.

Aunt Jane

OUR little village is generously sprinkled with "Salt of the Earth" for our preservation. But the one particular "pinch o' salt" to which our neighborhood turns most readily for saving from disaster is "Aunt Jane." If the little Simpkins lack shoes, it is Aunt Jane who trudges the half mile to see about it. If the Buholtzs have another unprovided for baby, Aunt Jane finds it a wardrobe. If the father of the over-large Kelly family falls ill, Aunt Jane gets the proper authorities in line to provide medicine and food and bed clothing. If poor mad Mary Jones and her old father lack coal during a coal famine, it is Aunt Jane who literally holds up the load of coal for the church and diverts it to this more pressing need.

She is chairman of the Philanthropy Committee of the Woman's Club and of the Red Cross Loan Closet Committee, but her activities are not the result of these offices; rather do these offices grace the generous heart and willing hand that for many years have pursued the way of helpfulness.

Whatever our need we have always known we could depend on Aunt Jane for saving from disaster—and that, not from any lack of normal interests and duties in her own life. She has husband, children, grandchildren—she is a housekeeper, and yard and garden keeper, too.

Aunt Jane belongs to her church, heart and hand—for religious services and church suppers and sewing societies. She belongs to her husband and children, in tender regard for their comfort and welfare. Beyond and outside these personal loyalties, Aunt Jane belongs to her community—for service.

Grace Schoettler.



MRS. DAVID LAWSON in the Alley Garden.

Readers of THE DEARBORN INDEPENDENT are urged to contribute sketches for this page. No sketch should exceed 1,000 words in length. Photographs should be sent, if possible.

The subject of your article need not be rich, fashionable nor famous. What we want are stories of "The Salt of the Earth."

Address all communications to The Editorial Department of The Dearborn Independent.



The Joy Car Man

"AND some people think that I'm foolish." The twinkle in his eye and the smile that spread over his face like the burst of sunshine after a summer shower indicated that he rather enjoyed it.

Charles Boyer, of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, isn't foolish. He is a success. He has spent his life in unstinted service for others and in so doing has attained happiness for himself. Unstinted service for others and happiness! There aren't many who make the combination. There are a great many years between fourteen and seventy, but Charles Boyer has devoted all of them to the happiness of children and invalids. "And when I look back over it all," he says, reminiscently, "it looks like a dream." What he has done would take an hour in the telling. But let us see what he is doing.

Through his own initiative he rigged up a tricycle with "trailers" in which he would take for a ride the child invalids of the city. Through public subscription he has purchased a large automobile known to every person in the city as the Boyer Joy Giving Car. So far this year it has meant more than forty thousand joy rides for the children and invalids. He has more than twenty-five invalid chairs which have meant fresh air and new sights for the shut-ins of the city. When not engaged in pushing the chairs himself and conducting the joy rides he is to be found on his rounds looking after the invalids who can't go out. When anyone needs crutches he phones Charles Boyer. He has them—and hot water bottles, and what not?

"I keep these things around the house," he said, "so I will have them when they call."

Mr. Boyer started his unique career of usefulness and good cheer when he was fourteen. Some school-mates addicted to drink and a temperance pledge read to him out of a book by his father marked the starting point. Lacking a hall for his meetings he pressed into service his mother's kitchen. The Mother's Kitchen Band outgrew its environment but retained its name. Temperance meetings for boys; a temperance hotel that barely broke even; outings for newsboys; work among crippled children in London; the organization of parties for the poor children of his city; a boat on the river for the youngsters; the boys' division of the Y. M. C. A.; bobsleds in winter, and then back again to invalids and the youngsters and the Joy Giving Car.

No wonder they call him the Joy Car Man.

James Wright Campbell.

The Doctor of Our Town

IT IS the Doctor of our town of whom I would write—a great, clean, wholesome man who gives humanity his best and keeps himself forever in the background. As gentle as a woman, yet fearless in denouncing evil, he is an inspiration to all who know him.

Last winter when the influenza epidemic was at its height this man worked both day and night, never faltering when even the one he loved best became seriously ill.

Worn by anxiety and loss of rest, he still carried cheer and comfort from home to home in our stricken village.

When news came that a brother physician living north of us was down with the disease he did not stop to question his own strength.

While we were sleeping comfortably in our warm beds, our Doctor was caring for his friend's patients all through the long winter nights.

Is he famous? No. He might be. He has the talent. But he gives it freely to an obscure little village.

His is a life of service, and he gives his very best. Day and night his strength goes out to those in need.

"The Salt of the Earth?" Yes, indeed! God bless, in his faithful, untiring service, "the Doctor Of Our Town."

Jennie B. Austin.